

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1 1. (Currently Amended) A method for steganographically combining data, comprising
2 the steps of:

3 acquiring first data via a ~~data-source~~ first sensor;

4 ~~contemporaneously~~ acquiring meta-data associated with the acquired first data via
5 ^{same &} ~~meta-data associated with the acquired first data via~~
6 ^{period of} ~~meta-data associated with the~~
7 ^{or a little} ~~acquired first data;~~

8 figure-of-merit testing the acquired first data and the acquired meta-data to
9 determine within what portion of the first data to combine the first data
10 and the acquired data; and

11 combining the acquired first data and the acquired meta-data into steganographic
12 data based upon said figure-of-merit testing, wherein a difference between
 the steganographic data and the acquired first data is imperceptible.

1 2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:
2 storing the steganographic data.

1 3. (Original) The method according to claim 2, wherein the steganographic data is
2 stored in memory coupled with the data source.

1 4. (Original) The method according to claim 2, wherein the steganographic data is
2 stored at a location remote from the site where the first data and meta-data are acquired.

1 5. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:
2 transmitting the steganographic data to the remote location.

1 6. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of combining produces
2 one or more steganographic data combinations.

1 7. (Original) The method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of:
2 evaluating each of the one or more steganographic data combinations to
3 determine the one combination that most closely matches the acquired first
4 data.

1 8. (Original) The method according to claim 7, further comprising the conditional step
2 of:

3 if all of the one or more steganographic data combinations perceptibly differ from
4 the acquired data, then repeating the step of combining.

1 9. (Original) The method according to claim 1, whereby the step of acquiring meta-data
2 is substantially completed before acquiring another first data.

1 10. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the
2 acquired meta-data is related to information received from a user.

1 11. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein:
2 the first data comprises an electro-optical image produced by a component of a
3 digital camera.

1 12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 11, wherein:
2 the meta-data relates to one or more of identification of the acquired image,
3 parameter settings of the digital camera, ~~the~~ an environment in which the
4 image is acquired, and a spatial description of the camera.

1 13. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:
2 pre-processing the meta-data by hashing the meta-data, encrypting the meta-data,
3 or encrypting the hashed meta-data.

1 14. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the first data and the meta-data
2 are acquired via the data source at approximately the same time.

a 1 15. (Currently Amended) A device for generating steganographic data, comprising:
2 a first ~~suite of sensors~~ sensor configured to acquire data;
3 a second ~~suite of sensors~~ sensor configured to contemporaneously acquire meta-
4 data, wherein the meta-data is associated with the acquired data;
5 a steganographic engine configured to combine the acquired data and the acquired
6 meta-data according to the results of a figure-of-merit testing to form
7 steganographic data, wherein the steganographic data differs
8 imperceptibly from the acquired data.

1 16. (Original) The device according to claim 15, further comprising:
2 a memory configured to store the steganographic data.

1 17. (Original) The device according to claim 15, wherein the steganographic data
2 comprises one or more different steganographic data combinations obtained using
3 different combination algorithms.

1 18. (Original) The device according to claim 17, further comprising:

2 a figure-of-merit tester configured to determine one of the one or more
3 steganographic data combinations that differs the least from the acquired
4 data.

1 19. (Currently Amended) The device according to claim 15, wherein the second ~~suite of~~
2 ~~sensors~~ sensor further comprises:

3 a user interface configured to receive information from a user of the device.

1 20. (Original) The device according to claim 19, wherein the user interface further
2 comprises:

3 one or more different kinds of input devices configured to interact with the user
4 interface.

1 21. (Original) The device according to claim 15, further comprising:
2 a communications interface configured to transmit the steganographic data to a
3 location remote from the device.

1 22. (Currently Amended) The device according to claim 15, wherein the second ~~suite of~~
2 ~~sensors~~ sensor is controlled to complete acquiring the meta-data before the first ~~suite of~~
3 ~~sensors~~ sensor acquires other data.

1 23. (Original) The device according to claim 15, wherein the meta-data comprises
2 hashed and encrypted meta-data portions.

1 24. (Currently Amended) A digital camera for steganographically combining meta-data,
2 comprising:
3 a an image plane configured to acquire an electro-optical image;

4 a ~~suite of sensors~~ sensor configured to contemporaneously acquire meta-data, said
5 meta-data is associated with the electro-optical image;
6 a steganographic engine configured to combine the electro-optical image and the
7 meta-data according to the results of a figure-of-merit test to form
8 steganographic data, said steganographic data differing imperceptibly
9 from the electro-optical image.

1 25. (Original) The digital camera according to claim 24, further comprising:
2 memory configured to store the steganographic data.

1 26. (Original) The digital camera according to claim 24, wherein the steganographic
2 data comprises one or more different steganographic data combinations obtained using
3 different combination algorithms.

1 27. (Original) The digital camera according to claim 26, further comprising:
2 a figure-of-merit tester configured to determine one of the one or more
3 steganographic data combinations that differs the least from the electro-
4 optical image.

1 28. (Original) The digital camera according to claim 24, further comprising:
2 a display area configured to display information related to the meta-data.

1 29. (Original) The digital camera according to claim 24, further comprising:
2 a display area configured to display information related to the steganographic
3 data.

1 30. (Currently Amended) The digital camera according to claim 24, wherein the ~~suite of~~
2 ~~sensors~~ sensor is configured to acquire meta-data related to one or more of camera angle,
3 geographical location, environmental conditions, date and time, image subject
4 identification and image parameter settings.

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1 31. (Original) The digital camera according to claim 24, wherein the meta-data
2 comprises hashed and encrypted meta-data portions.
